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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VIENNA 002827

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR, EUR/SE, EUR/ERA AND EUR/AGS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECIN](#) [TU](#) [CY](#) [AU](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE ON TURKISH EU ACCESSION: AUSTRIA SUPPORTS

OCTOBER 3 START DATE

REF: A) STATE 150087 B) VIENNA 2752 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a. i. Carol van Voorst

Reasons: 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Austrian Foreign Ministry's Southern Europe head and its director for Common Foreign and Security Policy told us August 22 that Austria considers the October 3 start date for Turkey's EU accession talks absolute. Austria is seeking language in the negotiating framework that "clarifies" alternatives to membership, although, in view of Turkish objections, Austria will not use the phrase "privileged partnership." In any event, Austria has no support for its position, and will likely follow a consensus to leave the negotiating framework as is. Austria opposes links to Turkish recognition of Cyprus, and does not/not seek a linkage between the Turkish and Croatian talks. By proposing language for the negotiating framework, Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel wants to show his constituents that he has represented the views of up to 80 percent of the electorate who oppose Turkish membership in the EU. He does not have to win this fight, and does not necessarily expect to do so -- but he has to show that he has made the effort. End summary.

No Question: Talks Start October 3

[1](#)2. (C) Economic-Political Counselor and Pol Unit Chief discussed ref (a) points with MFA A/S-equivalent for Southern Europe Clemens Kojas on August 22. Kojas confirmed Embassy's analysis (ref b). He stated categorically that Austria would not support a delay of the start of Turkish EU accession negotiations from October 3. Neither would Austria support a link between the start of the accession negotiations and Turkish recognition of the Republic of Cyprus. The resolution of Cyprus issue would have to be the result of the UN-sponsored peace process, Kojas said, and links to Turkey's EU accession talks could disturb that process.

No Link to Croatia

[1](#)3. (C) Kojas emphasized that Austria did not seek a linkage

between the candidacies of Turkey and Croatia. Austria remained convinced that Croatia belonged in the EU. However, Austria would address Croatia separately.

Wants "Clearer" Language on Alternatives to Membership

14. (C) Koja said Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel continues personally to determine Austria's policy on Turkish EU accession. Koja noted that Schuessel thought the EU had headed down the wrong road by offering eventual membership to Turkey. However, Koja said, Schuessel had worked to bring about the European Council decision of December 17, 2004, and stood by the terms of that decision. Still, Schussel would seek "clearer" language in the negotiating framework about possible alternatives for Turkey in case the negotiations failed to culminate in membership. Koja rejected the phrase "privileged partnership" out-of-hand, calling it a "non-word" since the Turks had ruled out the formulation. That said, Austria recognizes that the goal of accession talks is full membership in the EU. The question of alternative outcomes would arise only if accession talks failed.

15. (C) Koja noted that Schuessel faced a tough election in 2006. Only "ten percent" of the Austrian public supported Turkish EU membership, he said. This made it imperative for Schuessel and Foreign Minister Plassnik to show that they had fought hard to press the views of the Austrian public majority in EU councils dealing with Turkish accession. Schuessel could not afford to let the other Austrian parties portray him as weak on Turkey. On the other hand, Schuessel was under no illusions about the extent of Austria's clout. In fact, Koja acknowledged, no other EU member state currently supports the Austrian position. When we asked what Austria would do if it failed to win support for its proposal on language in the negotiating framework, Koja admitted that Austria would probably fall in line with a consensus of the major EU states.

Tight Timing Leaves Little Room for Maneuver

16. (C) Koja and (separately) MFA Common Foreign and Security Policy Director Andreas Riecken pointed to the August 31 COREPER and the September 1-2 "Gymnich" ministerial as the next venues for discussions on the EU Commission's draft negotiating framework. The next regular GAERC, on October 3, would allow no time for recovery if the Turks found the language objectionable. Koja alluded to a conversation in which Turkish MFA Under Secretary Tuygan specifically asked Schuessel to refrain from pushing for the "privileged

partnership" formulation. Tuygan had also asked that the EU Council not delay action until October 3, saying that might force Turkish officials literally to walk away from talks.

17. (C) Our contacts noted that any EU Ministerial, including "technical" ones, could approve the negotiating framework as an "A-point" (without debate). However, they thought this a poor option, because the "optics would be bad." They believed the UK Presidency would try to organize a meeting of the 25 EU Foreign Ministers on the margins of the UNGA in New York in September. If the necessary consensus emerged, the FMs could then "put on their GAERC hats" to pass the negotiating mandate.

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Comment: Domestic Considerations Impel Effort
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18. (C) It would not be accurate to say that Austria is seeking new conditions for starting accession talks with Turkey. Schuessel considers the start of talks on October 3 to be a done deal. However, he wants to show his constituents that he has done something to represent their skeptical view of Turkey -- especially since they "blamed" him for helping to seal the December 17 agreement to set the date for the Turkish talks. Schuessel has settled on the issue of additional language in the negotiating framework as a battle he must fight -- and probably lose -- to maintain his domestic political standing.

van Voorst